

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Aitkin, Minnesota
January 22, 2023
Third Sunday after the Epiphany
ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Introit

I will tell of your name to my | brothers;*
in the midst of the congregation I will | praise you.
All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn | to
the LORD,*
and all the families of the nations shall worship
before you.

For kingship belongs | to the LORD,*
and he rules over the | nations.

All the prosperous of the earth eat and | worship;*
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep him- | self alive.

Posterity shall | serve him;*
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a
people | yet unborn, that he has | done it.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

I will tell of your name to my | brothers;*
in the midst of the congregation I will | praise you.

Collect of the Day

P Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God,
mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch
forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend
us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who
lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 9:1–4

There will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.
In the former time he brought into contempt the land
of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter
time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land
beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.
You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

1 Corinthians 1:10–18

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no
divisions among you, but that you be united in the
same mind and the same judgment. For it has been
reported to me by Chloe's people that there is
quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is
that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow
Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is

Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel

Matthew 4:12–25

When [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of
the Gentiles—
the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of
death,
on them a light has dawned.”

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Sermon Text – Isaiah 9:1-4

Theme – Geography Matters

The class was “Russian History” and the professor was standing up in front on the first day of the new semester. He began by saying: “Students, when you are studying history one thing you have to remember is this: Geography Matters. Russia is the largest country in the world; it spans eleven time zones. In order to understand Russian history, you must account for its geographic realities.” That’s how the class on Russian history began.

Yes, “Geography Matters.” That’s true when you are studying the history of a large country like Russia, that’s true when you are studying the history of a much smaller nation, like Biblical Israel. Geography Matters.

Remembering that helps us to better understand the prophetic word spoken by Isaiah in our text. It is a word of liberty and hope shaped by geography. Isaiah speaks of **“the land of Zebulan and the land of Naphtali.”** What he says about them is that **“there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish”** (Isaiah 9:1).

“In the former time” it seemed as though the Lord had **“brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali”** (Isaiah 9:1). The Lord’s promise is this: **“in the later time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations”** (Isaiah 9:1).

Let me say it again: Geography Matters. **“The land of Zebulun”** was that part of the Promised Land that had been given to the tribe of Zebulun, the descendants of Jacob’s son, Zebulun. In like manner, **“the land of Naphtali”** was that portion of the Promised Land given to one of the other tribes of Israel, the tribe of Naphtali, which was made up of the descendants of another one of Jacob’s sons, Naphtali.

These two tribes had been allotted neighboring lands in the northern part of Israel. Think of Minnesota and Wisconsin – two states in the northern part of the U.S. which share a common border.

Again, like Minnesota and Wisconsin, the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali were beautiful, fertile areas. The only thing was, unlike Minnesota and Wisconsin, their location in Israel made them vulnerable to alien invaders. I’m not talking about invaders from outer space; I’m talking about invaders from a foreign land; I’m talking about conquering armies from the north who

were headed south, either to attack Jerusalem or Egypt. In order to get there, they had to travel through the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali.

The people living in those lands had experienced this as alien invaders from Assyria conquered these two lands. The people living there must have thought that the Lord was treating them with contempt. It seemed as though theirs was a land of **“darkness”** (Isaiah 9:2).

And, it was true. The Lord had brought these invaders upon them because as a nation Israel had abandoned Him by worshipping false gods and by committing all kinds of sin.

Does any of this sound like what many people today are doing? There are many who have abandoned Him. They may have grown up attending worship services, but now that they are all grown up and able to do as they please, they seldom attend worship. The false gods that people worship today may not be idols which people go to temples to worship; in order to worship their idols people today go to places called stadiums and arenas and gyms.

And yes, there are people today committing all kinds of sin. And, sometimes those people are us. To people like us who sometimes it seems are walking in darkness, a great light has shined.

What our text for today is talking about is a reversal of fortunes. Those lands **“of contempt”** will be made glorious. That’s because God is going to send yet another alien invader. It is not going to be another nation’s army that will invade them; it will be just one man. He is not going to come from the north; He is

going to come from heaven. This man is God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

He is going to be a different kind of invader. He will take no hostages; He will plunder no grain; He sheds no blood, but His own. Instead, He teaches and preaches, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matthew 4:17). In addition, **“people brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them”** (Matthew 4:24). People were flowing into the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, which at that time were called “Galilee.” They were coming so that they could be rescued by Jesus.

God's love would break the yoke of their burden. God's love would break the rod of their oppression (Isaiah 9:4). It is God's love that would be the reason why Jesus would head south out of the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali to do to Jerusalem where He would die on the cross for all sin, their sin and our sin. When that happened darkness covered the whole land, but it didn't last long. On the third day He rose from the dead. Because He did, we have hope. Through Jesus we have forgiveness and the promise of heaven. AMEN

- P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
- C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

Lord of all nations, Your Son became flesh to enlighten a world darkened by sin with His grace. Visit us with His gifts of forgiveness and life, that our way may be glorious with His salvation.

Almighty Lord, Your Son's cross and crucifixion is folly to the world, but it is the source of repentance and forgiveness for all His elect. Preserve the preaching of the cross in our midst, that from this life-giving tree we would continue to receive Your faith-preserving gifts.

Almighty God, You have called us to be united in the same mind and judgment in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Preserve us from divisions and quarreling wrought by false teaching and cults of personality, and fix our eyes on the Word of the cross.

Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son as the Savior of the world, that all the families of the nations might worship before You. Bless the families of this congregation with Your grace and protection, that they might remember You in both joy and trouble and worship before You forevermore.

O Lord, all kingship belongs to You. Rule over the nations for the good of Your people, that we might live in peace.

Holy God, Your Son welcomed the sick, the afflicted and those oppressed by demons and healed them. Have mercy upon all whom we bring before You

in prayer, [*especially* _____,] and deliver them according to Your gracious will.

Almighty God, the fame of Your Son spread everywhere as people witnessed His miracles and wonders. As He has wondrously saved us from sin and death, so open our mouths to speak of Him to all who will hear.

O Lord, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Rejoicing in His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

- C Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction

LSB 202

- P** The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be
gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and **T**
give you peace.
- C Amen, amen, amen.**

Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

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